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The metaphorical reference to body parts in Eastern literature is well known. The holy Quran mentions terms like **وجه الله** (literally Allah's face) and **يد الله** (literally Allah's hand) that have been interpreted both literally and metaphorically.

The use of various body parts in Urdu and Persian poetry lends itself to both literal and metaphorical explanations. Sometimes various symbols are used referring to body parts. For example, rose often refers to the face or the rosy cheeks of the beloved.

I find the various references to liver and composite words like **سوز جگر** quite interesting and deserving of a proper study. I will look at it in pathophysiological terms.

Many of the Urdu and Persian poets drank wine or were familiar with its effect on people and their bodies. The mystical poets use wine as a feeling of intoxication resulting from being in love especially a feeling of being in the company of the beloved or being completely lost in the beloved.

من تو شدم تو من شدی
من تن شدم تو جان شدی
تا کس نگوید بعد از این
من دیگرم تو دیگری

I have become you, and you me,
I am the body, you soul;
So that no one can say hereafter,
That you are someone, and me someone else.
-----Hazrat Ameer Khusro Dehlvi (1253-1325 AD)

They feel in a different, surreal and metaphysical world with no barriers. In this state they experience disinhibition just like someone under the influence of alcohol. The poetic license allows them to say what would constitute blasphemy if written in prose.

The other feeling they experience is one resulting from separation of the beloved. Here we come across phrases and verses I like **سوز جگر**, **خون جگر** (the burning of liver, the blood of liver).

جگر کی آگ سے اس دل کو جلتا دیکھتے جائو
ای آتش سودای تو خون کردہ جگرھا
بر باد شدہ در سر سودای تو سرھا

O the fire of love you have made the liver turn into blood
Many heads have been destroyed in love

جگر چھلنی ہے دل گھبرا رہا ہے

It is probable that the poets were aware of the alcohol induced liver toxicity and its physical manifestation.

جگرخون could very well refer to hematemesis resulting from esophageal varices, a common occurrence due to portal hypertension.

جگر سوز could be due to epigastric burning, retrosternal burning or discomfort from alcoholic hepatitis. Could جگر چھلنی (riddled liver) be the pathological description of micronodular cirrhosis? The connection between the heart and the liver was well known to the learned poets.

چشم مخمور تو دارد ز دلم قصد جگر
ترک مست است مگر میل کبابی دارد
دل سے تیری نگاہ جگر تک اتر گئی
حیران ہوں دل کو روئوں کہ پیٹوں جگر کو میں

The return of venous blood from the liver to the heart and the effects of liver disease on the heart can be found in poetry such as

دلی کو عاشق رویت نباشد
ہمیشہ غرقہ در خون جگر باد

A heart that does not fall into your face
Shall forever be drowned in the blood from the liver

از تو دل ار سفر کند با تپش جگر کند

If your heart travels it does so due to the burning of liver
The process of detoxification or purification of blood by the liver was not hidden from the astute intellect of the Persian giant Hafiz.

نماز در خم آن ابروان محرابی
کسی کند که به خون جگر طهارت کرد

Offering prayers in the archway of those curved eyebrows
Can only be done who makes ablution by the blood from the liver.

طهارت ار نه به خون جگر کند عاشق
به قول مفتی عشقش درست نیست نماز

If the lover does not purify himself from the blood dripping from the liver
His prayer will not be correct according to the jurist of love
An interesting couplet by Rumi throws light upon the strength that the liver signifies compared with the delicate heart

شمس تبریز این دل آشفته
بر جگر بسته است نام تو را

Shams Tabriz this frantic heart
Has itched your name on the liver

The heart is the seat of tender emotions but the liver is the powerhouse of fire that can consume the entire personality of the beloved. The indifference of the beloved sets the liver on fire.

چون دهانت بسته باشد در جگر آتش بود

As your mouth was sealed a fire was set ablaze in the liver.

مراد دل کجا جوید بقای جان کجا خواهد
دو چشم عشق پرآتش که در خون جگر باشد

Where can the desire of the heart be achieved and where can immortality be found?
These two loving eyes that are on fire due to the blood from the liver
Drinking the blood of liver is a morbid thought that occurs on rare occasions implying the torture
and anguish that a lover experiences.

سعدی به خفیه خون جگر خورد بارها

Sadi has tasted the blood of liver secretly numerous times

از جگر خوردن توبه نکنی
زانکه پرورده به خون جگری

Never does repent from eating the liver
One who had been nourished from the blood of liver
The burning that the liver experiences leads to the shedding of tears in an attempt to put out the
fire in it.

در آتش سوزنده صبوری که تواند
هر گه که بسوزد جگرم دیده بگرید

Who can remain patient forever when engulfed in fire?
Whenever the liver burns, eyes begin to shed tears.

زان هر نفسی چشمم خون جگر افشاند

With each breath my eyes shed the blood from the liver
Allama Muhammad Iqbal has used the symbol of خون جگر in reference to courage and relentless
struggle.

نعره زد عشق که خونین جگری پیدا شد
حسن لرزید که صاحب نظری پیدا شد

Love called out loudly that the one with a bloody liver has been born
Beauty trembled that the one full of vision has been born
For him the liver represents inner strength that is highly creative

شباب لاله و گل از طراوت جگرم

The youthfulness of tulip and the rose is due to freshness of my liver
From Rumi, Hafiz, Sadi to Ghalib and Iqbal liver is a commonly occurring metaphor representing the lover burning in love to the repository of human toughness, struggle and creativity. The physical manifestations of liver disease seem to have been discovered and described elegantly by the mystical poets long before the medical texts written in the past two centuries.